

ੴ ਸੇਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ

INTOXICANTS

HUMANITY'S ENEMY

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WHAT IS AN INTOXICANT?

An intoxicant is any such substance that causes suppression of brain activity. Such a substance is invariably addictive. The use of intoxicant drugs reduces and alters the conscious state of mind of the drug user. This altered state of mind, which is half conscious, breaks the substance abuser from all reality. In this state of mind, the substance abuser cannot think straight nor does such a person have the ability to take correct actions. Increased use of intoxicants results in the user slipping into a deeper state of unconsciousness, entering a state of temporary “insanity.” In such a state of intoxication, a person is unable to distinguish right from wrong or friend from foe. A person’s ability for rational thought and intellect is lost. In a state of drunken stupor or under the influence of drugs, a person commits actions, which ultimately bring shame and humiliation in this life and the hereafter. After indulging in immoral actions, one is filled with remorse, guilt and spends their remaining life in disgrace. A person who is intoxicated, is half sane, has no fear of the law, no shame or sense of propriety in society and no fear of God. In a state of insanity, an intoxicated person commits immoral actions, destroying their present life and their hereafter. Guru Amar Das describes the state of a person who indulges in drugs or alcohol as follows...

maanās bhari-aa aani-aa maanās bhari-aa aa-ay.
One person brings a full bottle, and another fills his cup.

jit peetai maṭ door ho-ay baral pavai vich aa-ay.
Drinking the wine, his intelligence departs, and madness enters his mind;

aapnaa paraa-i-aa na pachhaan-ee khasmahu Dhakay khaa-ay.
He cannot distinguish between his own and others, and he is struck down by his Lord and Master.

jit peetai khasam visrai dargeh milai sajaa-ay.
Drinking it, he forgets his Lord and Master, and he is punished in the Court of the Lord.

jhoothaa maḍ mool na peech-ee jay kaa paar vasaa-ay.
Do not drink the false wine at all, if it is in your power.

Naanak nadree sach maḍ paa-ee-ai satgur milai jis aa-ay.
O Nanak, the True Guru comes and meets the mortal; by His Grace, one obtains the True Wine.

Salok 3rd guru, p554

Under the influence of drugs or alcohol, a substance abuser constructs their own fake world of thoughts, which can only be described as building castles in the sky. Their surreal world of dreams is not based on reality. As the effect of

intoxicants starts to wear off, the person finds their fake world of dreams starting to break down. Their “trip” to this self-created world ends and reality starts to dawn upon the substance abuser. Returning to reality from their half insane world, an addict faces the daunting truth of their life situation, from which, they had sought to escape with the use of drugs or alcohol. The harshness of their reality becomes even more painful, creating even more stress and misery in their mind than before. The return to reality also known as a “downer” is so painful, a substance abuser will resort to taking their drug of abuse in order to return to their alternate reality. The repeated use of drugs or alcohol in order to escape misery or pain, results in a person becoming addicted to that substance. After a short time, a substance abuser becomes addicted, as if enslaved by the substance, because drugs and alcohol create physical dependence. A point comes when an addict cannot give up their habit, thus becoming caught in a downward spiral of addiction. The addict will often lose their life through their own addiction.

By God’s grace or through sheer good luck, if an addict develops the noble thought to give up their drug or alcohol, their good thoughts or will power to give up addiction become overwhelmed by their repetitive habit of substance abuse. An addict mentally wanting to escape from their addiction to drugs or alcohol is unable to do so, because long term abuse causes physical dependence in the body. Bhai Gurdas ji describes the helpless state of an addict in his salok. An opium addict listens to and accepts the advice of elders that opium use is evil but in spite of accepting this advice still cannot give up his addiction. Despite telling his children and friends opium is bad, an addict is enslaved to it. An addict of opium is like the gambler who despite losing all his wealth feels remorse but is helpless to give up gambling or the company of other gamblers. An addict becomes like the thief who knows theft is bad and is scared of getting caught, however still persists in thieving. The thief knows he will get caught and lives in fear of getting caught but still carries on . This is how the addict of opium is enslaved to the drug. Occasionally, the thief picks up courage to give up theft but his instinct overpowers him and compels him to steal. This instinct for stealing gets the thief caught, punished and killed. In this manner, all humans are enraptured by maya. All know and cry about maya ensnaring them yet none is able to win over maya. Instead all are caught in its net and ultimately are separated from God almighty.

How One Is Exposed To Intoxicants?

(i) Role of Parents

Parents who themselves use drugs or alcohol in front of their children, expose them to the free use of drugs or alcohol in their family. By using intoxicants or being drunk in front of children sanctions the use of drugs in a family environment. Children emulate and copy what their parents do. Children will copy the actions of their parents. Children will say whatever their parents say, whether it is good or bad. Even if such parents do not wish their children to use drugs or alcohol and from time to time even educate or discourage their children from substance abuse, they still know that when questioned by their children about the validity of their actions, they will have no defence for having taken intoxicants themselves.

Children may not openly question their parents using drugs or alcohol but in their heart, they start to associate drug or alcohol use as being normal. This is because their mind starts to build the logic that if drug or alcohol use was bad then why do parents drink alcohol, take drugs or smoke. After all, the logic of a child is based on the assumption that, "What my parents do is correct and if I follow their actions I will come to no harm either." When such parents, who take intoxicants, tell their own children to refrain from abusing alcohol or drugs, they find they are on shaky moral ground. Such children grow up to question and confront their parents that "If substance abuse is so bad then why do you as parents use them?" Children start to question and challenge their parents' authority. As a result, children lose respect for their parents and see their own parents as having no morals.

Some parents have also decided that a gradual exposure to "soft" drugs in a family environment is a way to control their children's habit. As such, they will drink in front of the family when at the dinner table or take their children to "pubs" and allow their children to drink in front of them.

(ii) Social Functions, Parties And Marriages

These day's, children accompany their parents to parties and marriages at which free alcohol is served. Waiters will repeatedly offer alcohol to all guests. After being asked repeatedly, youngsters give in to curiosity or at the insistence of their friends somehow drink the bad tasting alcohol. Alcohol will bring about a strange feeling which will numb the senses. This new feeling is exciting for the child who is curious yet totally naïve about the dangers of alcohol. They start to dance with their friends and when the effect of alcohol lessens, they drink some more. Indulging in alcohol use in a social setting, children unknowingly become enthralled and addicted to alcohol use. The use of alcohol, which is freely available at social functions, becomes regular and then habitual. This habit becomes the cause of their future downfall. In a party environment, parents are busy drinking and socialising. Children however, who have no foresight to appreciate the folly of their actions, take advantage of their parents negligence in order to drink and indulge in drugs.

(iii) Ignorance About Addictive Substances

A person can only avoid a harmful substance as long as they are aware of the bad consequences of drug abuse and they deplore the very idea of consuming such a

substance. However, if someone knowingly, naively or deliberately ignores the bad consequences of using such an addictive substance then, one will never be able to give up substance abuse. If such a person deliberately disregards the evils of substance abuse, rationalises the bad effects of it, considering the ill effects to be harmless, and in fact loves these addictive qualities of intoxicants then, they can never give up such a habit.

There was a time when someone who drank or used illicit substances would not return to their home or come in front of their family members until they had sobered up. Whilst drunk or under the influence of drugs, such a person would hide or stay away from the rest of the family and children. Nowadays, it has become the norm for three generations (father, son and grandson) to sit and drink in front of one another. This is now called “social drinking” and people feel immensely proud in making intoxicants socially acceptable.

(iv) **Hosting And Entertaining Guests**

When hosting or entertaining guests these days, it is considered rude not to serve or offer alcohol to them. The guests are not considered entertained or looked after properly if they have not been served alcohol. Guests themselves feel insulted and consider not to have been looked after properly if no alcohol is served, even though the host may have prepared and served the best cuisine possible. When the guest becomes intoxicated with the “water of mischief” i.e. alcohol then the guest does not perceive the need for good service, excellent cuisine or a comfortable bed. Such a person enters a half conscious state of mind induced by alcohol. He or she drifts into his or her own world of fantasy and forget all that is real around them. It is only after a few hours drowned in stupor that a person awakens to the real world, regaining their wits as the alcohol wears off. In this manner, new addicts are created when we as hosts or as guests are entertained and served alcohol or drugs in a social situation.

(v) **Socialising With A Substance Abuser Or Listening To Those Who Praise Intoxicant Use.**

In our daily lives, the company we keep has a great effect on our actions. We start to emulate the actions of the kind of people we interact with or keep company with sooner or later. Bhagat Kabir ji has said, “**A person reaps the fruit of the kind of company they keep.**” Through naivety, ignorance or under duress, if one falls into the company of people who are addicts or abuse substances then unfortunately, we will hear addicts praising the wonderful effects of intoxicants. Such people will praise and eulogise the use of drugs or alcohol so much so that harmful substances like cocaine are given names like “angel dust” or alcohol is called “beautiful angel” and opium is called the “king of drugs.” Addicts will trivialise the evil effects of drugs and praise drugs through songs or poetry. A naïve or simple person becomes swayed by such praise and supposed benefits of alcohol or drugs. One is duped or convinced into believing that intoxicants can take one to heaven and back. In order to encourage such a naïve and unsure person into joining them, addicts will buy a free drink or illicit drug to the novice to try. After a drink or taking a drug, one is intoxicated, transported to an imaginary world, thus forgetting this real world. A few episodes later and a naïve person becomes an addict too.

(vi) Tiredness As An Excuse To Use Intoxicants

In order to earn a livelihood and provide for their family people can get tired. To work harder and longer or to escape the mundane reality of work people take drugs, alcohol, steroids or stimulants. Under the influence of drugs or alcohol, a person is able to work longer and harder. In their greed to work more and ward off tiredness, people indulge in the use of drugs that lead to addiction.

(vii) Drug Use Encouraged By Bosses To Increase Productivity

These days another deplorable practice has come to light. Factory owners or farmers encourage or actively give drugs to their employees in order to increase productivity. Workers are provided with free or very cheap drugs like opium to get them to work harder and longer. Workers are given strong tea and knowingly or otherwise have their tea spiked with drugs so that they remain awake for longer and thus earn more money. What they do not know is that indulging in the use of drugs will throw them into the pits of addiction. By drinking, these so called “herbal” teas to boost productivity, many thousands of people become addicted to drugs. In this manner, addicts are created through the work place.

(viii) Unemployment

In this day and age, unemployment has spread worldwide. Computers and increased mechanisation has meant that jobs have become fewer. Present day men and women who are educated, feel humiliated if asked to do manual labour. Highly skilled jobs are few and those of intermediate education are unable to get such jobs. Lack of experience contributes to the situation. Family needs remain the same and the whole family looks towards the main adult to earn something. In this state of affairs, great stress comes to bear upon such a person. To bear the stress and relieve mental tension people drink to forget their present situation. A few hours may pass enraptured by drink and drugs. A person may escape for a little while under the influence of intoxicants but as their effect wears off, the stress and tension of their life situation starts to return just as intensely as before. A person will resort to drinking or taking drugs to forget their situation. The root causes of their problems remain nonetheless. In fact, the cost of taking drugs or alcohol adds to the burden of family expenses. Money being tight further strangles a person by causing more mental anguish. In the throes of addiction, an intoxicated person can become so depressed that they can start getting suicidal thoughts. A large number of people commit suicide under the influence of drugs or alcohol due to the anguish of their life situation.

(ix) Corporate Hospitality, Electioneering

Our countries have a democratic system of government. So in order to be elected, a politician has to get votes. As such, politicians go from house to house looking for support. In some countries, politicians host lavish parties where alcohol is distributed to entice people to vote. In India, politicians have their supporters freely distribute alcohol and drugs to buy votes. During elections, all kinds of intoxicants are availed to buy votes, as it is impossible to win elections without the use of alcohol and drugs. During the election months, the freely available drugs and alcohol create thousands more addicts, who wander the streets once elections are over. The politicians take up lofty positions of power but the addicts they created return to harass and bother their own families. Families are plunged into turmoil and anguish when such addicts become a burden on the rest

of the family members. Such people are forced to sell their house, land and possessions to fund their habits. What for? Just to feed their addiction to intoxicants.

(x) Peer Group Pressure

Sometimes we see people who, even though are well educated about the evils of intoxicants, succumb to drugs or alcohol use themselves. If asked, such people often admit that they are aware of the evils of substance abuse and in fact have warned others about drug misuse but started using drugs when mixing in the wrong sort of company. Often they will admit they started abusing substances when they were cajoled or influenced by their peers into the habit. One needs to remember that those who are strong in their resolve and stand upon their principles are not swayed by peer group pressure or influenced by their comrades. Society or peers can only influence us if one has a weak mind or will. If one is meek and suppresses the voice of their conscience in preference to the opinion of his or her peers, then that person will fall from their ideals and abandon their principles. A person with a subdued conscience is not respected amongst his or her peers. Only those people who stand firm on their principles gain respect. In fact, only a person whose conscience is weak is subdued by society or peer group pressure. A person of strong principles and moral conscience may stand-alone. By never abandoning their principles, society comes to respect and praise such a man or woman. So, one should never abandon high ideals or principles when under pressure from society or peers. Thus, one can avoid falling prey to addiction of illicit substances.

(xi) Family Problems And Discord

In the real world fights or arguments can occur between husband and wife, father and son, in fact between any family members. Family discord and fighting can become a cause of great personal stress. Rather than seek out and address the root cause of family feuds or discord, people seek solace and refuge in drugs or alcohol in order to avoid facing stress or tension. Indulging in intoxicants causes mental anxiety and disorientation. In trying to escape into a world of inebriation, often a person causes more familial tensions to build up. A lot of family altercations happen when people are drunk or under the influence of drugs. Because of intoxication, a person will often resort to violence due to diminished responsibility. As family tension and feuding increases, personal stress increases as well. A person will indulge more in alcohol or drugs to escape this mental tension. A vicious circle of self-abuse is set up. In seeking escape from family problems, a person who resorts to using illicit substances becomes addicted to them. In doing so, a person who is addicted then becomes a burden on his or her family, creating much more tension, stress and family feuds than before. Rather than solving a problem, such a person having become an addict is now a problem himself or herself.

(xii) Seductive Advertising

In this day and age, money seems to make the world go round. Every human is engrossed in trying to accumulate as much as they can. Hoarding wealth seems to be the lifetime aim of most people. In order to earn wealth, humans are willing to endure any amount of harm and pain. Multinational companies also have maximum profit as their sole aim. Such firms will do

anything for profit. They are willing to sell cancer causing cigarettes or cirrhosis causing alcohol in attractive packaging. Such companies will pay millions for adverts on billboards, magazines, newspapers, TV etc. In fact, no media or place is free from adverts placed by such companies. So seductive is their packaging and advertising that a naïve person quickly forgets the harmful effects of intoxicants and ends up trying these substances. Just as a child is mesmerised by the bright yellow flame and puts its hand in the fire. The child may cry and repent having burnt their hand, however the damage has been done. In the same way, naïve people are taken in by seductive advertising, falling prey to the sales campaigns of liquor and tobacco companies. Once a person is trapped by these adverts, they come to believe that liquor or tobacco etc is good for them. Soon, they become addicted to the effects of alcohol, tobacco, drugs etc. Media advertising is so powerful that it can make sand appear more valuable than gold. One needs to be wary of the misleading effect media advertising can have on us and avoid falling into their trap of addiction.

(xiii) Role Of Films, TV And Other Media

Programmes shown on the TV or films shown in cinemas always portray the hero to be smoking or turning to drink to look more impressive. Tobacco and alcohol companies finance films and programmes because of which the actors pose with cigarettes or alcohol when thinking or in some difficult situation. This gives the wrong impression that all problems or worries can be eradicated with the aid of alcohol or cigarettes just because the actor was sipping alcohol or smoking. At other times drinking and smoking is shown to be part of advanced or high society. People watch the actors and are influenced into drinking or smoking. Eventually their habit is formed because at times of adversity they will turn to intoxicants to solve their problem.

(xiv) Drugs Used As A Spiritual Aid

In Punjab, people have been distributing hemp mixed with milk to poor villagers under the guise that it increases spirituality. Poor village folk take this freely distributed hemp potion but become addicted. In this manner, the people who distribute drugs get extra customers whilst using religion as an excuse. Today, there are thousands of families with addicted members. These new addicts are a burden to their families and society in general. Cannabis or hemp is illegal in many countries. In Punjab many thousands fall prey to the practice of using hemp to get a spiritual experience but fall into the trap of addiction. So convinced are these people who serve hemp under the guise of religious service that they mistakenly are pushing others into the quicksand that is addiction to intoxicants.

Intoxicants: A Means To Destroy Communities

History is witness to that fact that nations or communities that could not be defeated by force or war, can be subdued easily if they are sabotaged with drugs and alcohol. Having the cancer of addiction thrust upon them has often defeated those people or nations, who could not be defeated by force.

Those nations or communities that are enslaved by drugs or alcohol often destroy their health, wealth and sell their integrity as well. Such societies destroy their own nation and think nothing of selling out their people to an adversary or foreign nation. History is replete with examples of many nations which were noble but the weapon of intoxication yet destroyed these communities,. British settlers bought vast tracts of land in America from the native Indians for the price of a few bottles of alcohol and tobacco. Alcohol was affectionately called “firewater.” The proud and brave nation of native Indians was consumed and destroyed by the evils of alcohol and drugs like opium. The native Indians were herded into reservations and were addicted to cheap alcohol. Even today their communities are ravaged by alcohol and drugs provided by the government. Intoxicants not only destroyed their will to stand up for their rights but has removed all self esteem from their beings so that they now live on tiny pieces of land waiting for government handouts. Today the legacy of native Indians can only be seen in museums or in tourist places where native Indians dance in their costumes for a living. The Australian aboriginal people and the Maoris of New Zealand too were subdued by being introduced to alcohol and drugs like opium. Now the aboriginal people who were the true people of Australia live in shantytowns and reservations addicted to drugs and alcohol. Their fate was the same as the native Indians of Canada and America. In Ireland, the British would sell cheap alcohol or distribute it free to subdue the aspirations of freedom that the Irish people had. By setting up pubs freely across the island, the evil of alcohol was spread to make the people easier to rule and occupy. Even though part of Ireland is now free, the legacy of alcohol abuse still plagues their society many years later.

The Japanese used intoxicants freely to make the Chinese and Mongolian populations addicted. As such, they were ridden with addiction to opium. Under the British, Chinese people were supplied with cheap opium from other parts of the empire to keep them subdued and easier to occupy. Under the 1948 revolution, the Chinese people began to emerge from the insanity drug addiction. Now they are poised to be strong again.

In a similar way, in order to subdue the African nations in their empire, the British used to introduce opium and alcohol as a weapon to corrupt the local population. As such, young people who are the guardians of the nation are addicted to drugs and the last thing on their minds is the freedom of their country or nation.

When the British could not quash the Khalsa nation in Punjab through numerous underhand tactics, they resorted to introducing the evils of opium, alcohol and cannabis amongst the Sikh soldiers. The brave and proud Akali nihang Singhs who fought under the leadership of Akali Phoola Singh for the glory of the Khalsa nation were eventually singled out and killed one by one. Those who survived were forced into hard labour. Those who chose to join the British empire were deceived into taking hemp and opium. Even to this day, the so-called Nihangs are unable to abandon their dependence on cannabis.

Using the same principles of destroying people through providing intoxicants, today our own fellow countrymen are prepared to deceive their fellow countrymen. In order to destroy our community we will find liquor shops and pubs on every corner

of every town or city. A network of liquor stores is laid out so that liquor is easily available at every cross road in the land. Every shop and countless vendors, sell intoxicants such as tobacco, gutka, cigarettes etc near schools, colleges and public parks. These intoxicants are packaged seductively and are so cheap as to entice the youth to buy them repeatedly. These dangerous intoxicants have names so seductive that they entice the user into a sense that they are safe. Users of

Mesmerised by the attractive packaging, youngsters buy tobacco products like gutka, forgetting the harmful effects of such products. Only those in power know why the use of intoxicants is allowed to spread unchecked. Under what duress and circumstances is this evil practice being allowed to spread. Only our political leaders can provide the answer. The widespread use of intoxicants and drugs is increasing daily and will eventually destroy the very fabric of our society and our future generations.

THE STATE OF TODAY'S YOUTH

Punjab was known as the land of five rivers, of religions, Gurus and spiritual guides. Professor Puran Singh used to say that Punjab exists due to the Guru's words not because of the Hindus or Muslims living there. Today the whole atmosphere has changed in this pious and prosperous land. It is with deep sorrow and a full heart that one has to admit that Punjab now exists but due to the dependence on drugs of today's youth. There is no addictive substance that is not abused in Punjab today. From cheaply available chewable tobacco to heroin and smack, which cost thousands per gram. So endemic is drug abuse that upto 85% of young people have abused hard drugs like heroin and cocaine and through addiction are ruining their prime years of their lives. Parents, family, society and even politicians sigh in resignation at this mushrooming epidemic. Government or charity run drug programmes are limited in their success and are finding their campaigns are all but media consumption.

Go to any college or school today and you will find that children who are supposed to study to become tomorrow's doctors, engineers, politicians or business people are engrossed in addiction to drugs like heroin, opium, cannabis, cocaine, amphetamines etc. the use of injectable drugs is now common place.

In school playgrounds and parks, lizards are disappearing fast. On asking why? We find out that today's youth has exceeded the previous generations. Students kill these lizards, burn them and eat the ashes produced, in order to get a 'high'. Ordinary people are left bereft and beside themselves after reading about the antics of today's youth that is addicted to substance abuse in any shape or form. Youngsters now shave their heads and rub boot polish on them in order to stun their nervous system and extract the intoxicants out of boot polish. Youngsters abuse things like Vicks (iodex) by spreading it on bread and eating it. In this way intoxicants can be ingested from menthol based medicines. Empty syringes and blister packs can be found littered around toilets and washrooms in schools, all proof of the mushrooming epidemic of drug and substance abuse. Children are inhaling and sniffing aerosol based lighter fuels, glue and even petrol to become intoxicated. In the near future, such youngsters will no doubt pay a heavy price with their health. According to government figures in Punjab, 70% of children use tobacco and amphetamines or benzodiazepines. This is worrying development and will be extremely detrimental to the future well being of our society and country.

RELIGION FORBIDS INTOXICANTS

Whereas the use of drugs causes loss of mental stability, respect in society as well as financial loss, it also becomes an obstacle on the path of spirituality and attaining God. Mental stillness, spiritual bliss and meditation upon God will be more fruitful if brain cells and nerves are fresh and healthy. If the nervous system and brain cells are “fused out” or disrupted by the use of intoxicants then such a person can never achieve meditative stillness of the mind let alone attaining God. If we research old Hindu scriptures called the Puran written by Ved Vyas we find that he has cursed and denounced people who use intoxicants so strongly that even listening to the curses heaped upon an addict are difficult. Ved Vyas writes in the Puran that the demigod of knowledge Brahma told his son Naarad, the evil effects of intoxication. He said that a person who smokes, inhales or eats tobacco goes straight to hell. A Brahmin who accepts offerings from those who smoke or use tobacco becomes a filth eating pig in his next life.

Ved Vyas writes further that a person who uses intoxicants like tobacco, washes all their good deeds away and all previous balance of good deeds is wiped away. Such a person is the lowest being in society and after death falls into the deepest of all hells where they receive the most horrendous punishments.

Vyas writes further that a person who uses tobacco gets more punishment and is committing a greater sin than if they eat flesh, drink alcohol and fornicate with their mother and sister combined. So, if tobacco use is so harmful spiritually, let alone physically, then it is better to leave this filthy habit. Vyas ji further states that millions of good deeds, spiritual practices like yoga, pilgrimages, donations, fasts, ablutions at all the Hindu holy places, are wasted or wiped away for those who take tobacco even once. In the Sankadhak Puraan there are another 25 verses denouncing the use of intoxicants that are worth reading. Tobacco is especially harmful, destroys spiritual character, and effaces all spiritual benefits for its user.

SWAMI DAYANAND’S LAST WILL

It would not be out of place to write about the last Will of Swami Dayanand who was the founder of a right wing Hindu religious movement called Arya Samaj. In order to show his Aryan religion to be higher than all other faiths, he would not refrain from denouncing other religions, prophets or Gurus. So much so, he even denounced and questioned the authenticity and character of Guru Nanak Dev ji. In answer to Swami Dayanand ji’s vociferous opposition to Guru Nanak Dev ji, Giani Ditt Singh ji, a renowned Sikh scholar publicly challenged, debated and won three times against Swami Dayanand. Dayanand could not stand up to and was out-classed repeatedly by Giani Ditt Singh ji on several occasions in open debates on religion.

Towards the end of his last days, Swami Dayanand was in a town called Ajmer. Swami ji called upon a very close friend named Mehta Bhaag Ram. Swami ji made clear his last wishes and his Will that his body was to be cremated according to ancient Hindu Vedic rites. He specifically asked that no one who had used or smoked tobacco should touch, bathe or shoulder his body after death. On 30th October 1883, Swami Dayanand passed away. Mehta Bhaag Ram and other associates of Swami ji remembered the last wishes of Dayanand ji. After much thought the last rites of Dayanand ji were given over to Sikh’s because it was considered that let alone smoking, Sikhs did not even touch tobacco. Now however, the so-called Sikhs of today are completely the opposite of those gone before them. Sikhs of today need urgently to attune and align themselves with their great legacy and religion. Today, false religious leaders are hijacking our glorious Sikh principles and presenting them

as their own, in order to fool people to part with their money and their faith. Sikhs however, feel proud in abandoning their religious golden principles in order to indulge in intoxicants. This truly is a depressing and dangerous prospect for our community.

In our sikh way of life, Guru ji has told us repeatedly to become intoxicated with love for God, live on simple food and ordered us absolutely, not to indulge in any type of stimulant or intoxicants whatsoever. Guru Arjan Dev ji tells us that...

durmat mad jo peevtay bikhlee pat kamlee.

Those fools, who drink in the wine of evil-mindedness, become the husbands of prostitutes.

raam rasaa-in jo ratay naanak sach amlee.

But those who are imbued with the sublime essence of the Lord, O Nanak, are intoxicated with the Truth.

Rag Asa 5th guru, p399

Bhagat Kabir ji has tells us that cannabis, fish and alcohol etc. destroy all the spiritual benefits gained from pilgrimages, godly practices and will go to hell . If we listen to Bhagat Kabir ji then we will save our spiritual wealth if not then we stand to loose a great deal.

kabeer bhaa^Ng maachhulee suraa paan jo jo paraanee khaa^Nhi.

Kabeer, those mortals who consume marijuana, fish and wine

tirath barat naym kee-ay tay sabhai rasaatal jaa^Nhi.

- no matter what pilgrimages, fasts and rituals they follow, they will all go to hell

Salok Bhagat Kabir ji, p1377

Gurbani tells us that alcohol is the cause and root of numerous evil actions in that...

it mudd peetai naankaa bahu^Nay khatee-ah bikaar.

Drinking in this wine, O Nanak, one takes on countless sins and corruptions

Bihagra ki vaar Mardana ji ,p553

Guru Amardas ji tells us how evil alcohol is? He says that by drinking alcohol we loose our sense of morality. A drunken persons mind enters a state of insanity. Then a drunken person cannot distinguish between friend and foe. A drunken person commits sinful acts that he or she would not, if sober. By indulging in sinful activities one falls into disrepute in this world and in the hereafter, them one's soul is punished. So we should not drink alcohol, which results in us being shamed in this world and the lord's house in the afterlife.

maan^Nas bhari-aa aani-aa maan^Nas bhari-aa aa-ay.

One person brings a full bottle, and another fills his cup.

jit peetai mat door ho-ay barai pavai vich aa-ay.

Drinking the wine, his intelligence departs, and madness enters his mind;

aapnaa paraa-i-aa na pachhaan-ee khasmahu Dhakay khaa-ay.

He cannot distinguish between his own and others, and he is struck down by his Lord and Master.

jit peetai khasam visrai dargeh milai sajaa-ay.

Drinking it, he forgets his Lord and Master, and he is punished in the Court of the Lord.

jhoothaa mad mool na peech-ee jay kaa paar vasaa-ay.

Do not drink the false wine at all, if it is in your power.

Naanak nadree sach mad paa-ee-ai satgur milai jis aa-ay.

O Nanak, the True Guru comes and meets the mortal; by His Grace, one obtains the True Wine.

Salok 3rd guru, p554

Guru Arjun Dev ji has stopped us from drinking alcohol, as it means we start living in a state of insanity. Under the influence of alcohol, we destroy this precious yet hard to find human life. Guru ji has told us not to waste this human life in a stupor....

hochhaa mad chaakh ho-ay tum baavar dulabh janam akaarath.

You taste the weak, insipid wine, and you have gone insane. You have uselessly wasted this precious human life.

ray nar aisee karahi i-aanath.

O man, such is the foolishness you practice.

Maru 5th guru, p1001

Bhai Desa Singh, a Sikh during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh ji, has written about the code of conduct of a Sikh. He writes about the need to avoid, at all costs, five things. These are gambling, theft, adultery, alcohol and opium. He states further, only that person is a truly wise Sikh who never even looks at, yet alone use, intoxicants like tobacco, opium, cannabis and alcohol.

Bhai Santokh Singh, who was a prolific Sikh scholar, writes that alcohol destroys all succeeding generations and tobacco destroys 100 generations whereas cannabis destroys one succeeding generation.

An historical text, called Twaarikh Guru Khalsa, has a very appropriate and apt incident from the time of Guru Gobind Singh ji. It is said that Guru Gobind Singh ji along with a band of Singhs was in a hunting party riding his steed. As Guru ji was riding his horse, it suddenly stopped and refused to step into a field. Guru ji heeled the horse and used his stirrup to encourage the horse to move forward but it would not do so. Guru ji ordered his Sikhs to dismount and check what plants were growing in

the field that prevented the horse from stepping into it. The Sikhs had a good look and reported to Guru ji that tobacco plants were growing in the field. Guru ji replied “Singhs the reason why the blue steed refuses to step into the field is because it has tobacco plants growing in it.” Guru addressed the Singhs and said, “You have witnessed yourself that the horse refuses to step into a tobacco field. See how tobacco pollutes the very earth it grows on. Even an animal will not step on such unclean land. Tobacco is so unclean and such a pollutant that it destroys all spiritual benefits, let alone using it you are not even to touch it.” The Singhs took heed and obeyed Guru ji’s command from then on.

Those of us who have seen animals grazing in villages know this fact well. Animals will stop grazing on grass if it comes across a tobacco plant in the vicinity. The animals will leave a patch of grass around a tobacco plant and not even touch the grass around it. Tobacco smell is so bad and strong that a dog that eats rotten flesh runs a mile from tobacco. Dogs often demarcate an area where they defecate or urinate. If the water, used to wash a hookah or smoker’s pipe, is thrown on this area where a dog defecates daily, you will witness that the dog will not enter that area again due to the smell of tobacco. We need to contemplate the fact that animals with limited intelligence are able to distinguish between what is pure or impure. However man, who has been placed at the apex of all creation, given consciousness and intellect has turned his back on the gift of wisdom and will take smoke, ingest, inhale or ink any intoxicant.

If we persist in indulging ourselves with intoxicants then we will be stepping down the path described by Bhagat Kabir ji. He warns us that to knowingly commit a sin when the mind is aware of the gravity of a sin, then there can be no excuse for falling into a well despite carrying a lamp on your hand. Then we will have to endure the result of our action that is falling in the well of addiction. No one can save us then from our foolish action. Now is the right time for us to nurture wisdom that will come from imbibing the message of our guru’s and that is not to partake in illicit substances. In our effort to walk on God’s path, we will avoid falling into the well of addiction. We will thus make our precious life, worthwhile.

The writer of the book called janam saakhi, which depicts the life of Guru Nanak dev ji, mentions the meeting between Guru Nanak dev ji and the Sidh’s (renunciate monks who follow the path of yoga). These yogis’s lived high in the Himalayas and used drugs or alcohol to get an artificially induced “high” or spiritual sensation. Guru ji discouraged this practice and told the yogi’s not to be fooled by this artificial, short lasting and altered stupor to be confused with the real elation brought by meditation on the true lords name. True love for God brings about a never ending, elevated state of ecstasy through naam meditation. Guru ji told the yogi’s to drink the elixir of naam, the nectar of immortality, that is the name of god.

Guru Arjan dev ji tell us to abandon all worldly poisons and drink the ultimate elixir of naam. Those who are coloured with the taste of naam are elevated so much, that they never come down from this state of ecstasy, even in the turmoil of adversity. The ecstasy of naam meditation is such that it could not disrupt the equipoise of Bhai Mati das ji when he was sawn in half or Bhai Dyala ji when he was boiled alive for standing up for his faith. Imbued with the ecstasy of naam Subheg Singh and Shabaaz Singh preferred to be martyred on the wheel of spikes yet were still smiling, welcoming the moment they could be martyred for their faith. The one who is intoxicated with true naam will be in ecstasy even when scalped alive like Bhai Taru Singh ji. He was elated to have laid his life for the principles of religious freedom. For 21 days, he stayed alive after being scalped still joyously singing Japji

sahib until his last breath. The person who is imbued in the true colour of naam can have their every joint and limb cut to pieces like Bhai Mani Singh ji yet still stand for the principles of justice, equality and religion. For these true Sikhs **“sorrow and happiness were the same and everlasting bliss eradicated separation”**. Whichever page of Khalsa history we turn to, we will find, that to uphold the honour of the downtrodden, uphold principles of spirituality, religious freedom and self-respect, countless Sikhs gave up their lives because they were coloured and intoxicated with naam.

On the other hand, in the annals of history, we will find no examples of people who are addicted to drugs like cocaine, alcohol, cannabis, willingly sacrificing their lives for religion or upliftment of others. If such an addict died under duress or by force for another, cannot be said. Today there is a need to abandon addiction to insanity inducing, short-lived pleasure giving drugs. It is high time to embrace naam meditation which brings never ending contentment, gives will power, self respect and brings in us the desire to defend the rights of other less fortunate than us.

In Punjab, there is a proverb that says that a hundred wise men will all reach the same wise conclusion; fools will each have a different conclusion for the same fact. One such wise man in Punjab is a poet who was called Girdhar Rai. He wrote a book of 341 poems called Kundaliay chhand. He too describes in his poems the spiritual bankruptcy that is brought about by taking drugs. He says that those who take opium and alcohol become bereft of spirituality. An addict becomes intellectually blind and is a friend to no one. Smokers of tobacco loose respect for others, themselves and in turn no one respects them either. Tobacco burns a smoker in such a way that they speak harsh words from their heart.

A True Anecdote

Dr Sarup Singh Alag, in his book “Gurmat and intoxicants,” mentions a personal incident that involved his friend, which educates us about the misuse of intoxicants. He had a friend in Toronto who did not drink. At times would warn his children too, not to drink alcohol. This friend would tell his children that alcohol was a dangerous poison, evidenced by the fact that, on alcohol bottles, there is a poison sign warning of its danger. One time a few friends came to this person’s house and to entertain them, he put a bottle of alcohol and a few glasses in front of his guests. All the while, that person’s young son was watching his father place the alcohol bottle in front of the guests. The child could not watch any longer and asked his father who these guests were. His father replied that the guests were very good and dear friends of his. The child asked his father a very pertinent and abrupt question; as to why was he serving poison to his best friends if they were dear to him. The son asked what kind of friend serves poison to his friends. Everyone gathered, were surprised by and ashamed in front of the child’s incisive wisdom. The father and the gathered guests were so taken aback by the child’s question that from that day onwards, everyone resolved with conviction, not to drink alcohol, ever again. That friend resolved that he was not going to serve alcohol ever again because the poison that he does not use himself is certainly not fit to give to others. In fact, the one who serves alcohol to others is worse than the one who uses intoxicants.

III Effects Of Substance Abuse

(i) Intoxicants Cause Sterility, Birth Defects And Infertility

Wise people say that youth can be reckless and blasé. In their carefree attitude to drug use, young people carry on with their way of thinking. A reckless, carefree youth do not listen to their elders nor do they understand the ill effects of using drugs or alcohol. Their behaviour has become conditioned by drug use and their rational behaviour has been destroyed by their addiction. So, they carry on with their activity undeterred and without care or attention to their own fate.

Today, young people in their youthful recklessness have resorted to unrestricted use of drugs and alcohol. They are marching unaware, on the path to addiction and oblivious to the real ill effects of intoxicants. Either today's youth is unaware of the dangerous side effects of drug and substance abuse or they are knowingly ignoring the fact that these substances will harm their health, wealth and spirituality just like Bhagat Kabir say that "knowingly one commits sinful acts". Either way you look at it, poison is poison, whether you take it knowingly or without knowledge of its ill effects, intoxicants will leave their effect on you. A survey conducted by the health board and charitable organisations in Jammu and Punjab into the health of drug abusers of 5 years or more, has found devastating effects on the health of young people. Apart from all other ill effects on health, 10% of drug users were completely sterile in the under 25 group. A further 15 % were on the verge of sterility. These people were too embarrassed to admit their problem to their families and sought medical help anonymously, at great cost, to cure their dwindling fertility. They were receiving active treatment to boost their male fertility through medication and hormone replacement. Even today, the youth must take heed in order to safeguard the well being of the next, yet unborn generation. If no action is taken now there will be no next generation. Women who are using drugs and alcohol are shown in the survey, to becoming victims of infertility and unable to conceive due to the detrimental health effects of drugs or alcohol. The future of the youth has come to a very dangerous crossroads indeed. If they do not take action now, the future will only bring despair and disappointment.

(ii) Intoxicants Destroy The Body

No intoxicant is good for the health. All of them affect and destroy the body in one-way or the other. Addiction to illicit substances destroy wealth, self esteem and social standing. Apart from this, intoxicants cause numerous health problems too. Take tobacco for instance, which is inhaled in cigarettes, chewed or snuffed through the nose in order to gain its intoxicating effect. The smoke from tobacco or the tobacco plant itself produces 21 poisonous chemicals that are harmful to humans (nicotine, benzene, aromatic and polycyclic hydrocarbons, nitrosamines to name a few). The various hydrocarbons in tobacco cause cancer of the lungs, oesophagus (food pipe), mouth, tongue, liver and bowel. In other parts of the body tobacco affects the blood vessels and heart, hardening the arteries of the body. As a result, the blood vessels are blocked, leading to heart attacks, high blood pressure and stroke of the brain (brain haemorrhage). In some, the use of alcohol destroys the kidneys and pancreas, which can then lead to diabetes, obesity and kidney failure. Alcohol use will cause damage of the liver leading to cirrhosis (irreversible destruction), water retention (ascites), central obesity, irreversible bleeding or haemorrhage and death. According to medical research, a single episode of getting drunk with alcohol results in several million brain cells becoming inactive. A large proportion of these cells die

and are never replaced with new cells. As a result, the entire nervous system is weakened and affects the memory capacity of a human. Smoking tobacco causes asthma and emphysema apart from causing lung cancer. Smoking also results in reduced ability to fight infections of the respiratory tract and smokers are more likely to get diseases like tuberculosis.

One of the chemicals found in tobacco and the most destructive, addictive, potent and dangerous, is nicotine. One drop of pure nicotine is poisonous enough to kill 6 cats or two dogs instantly. Eight drops can kill a powerful and active animal like a horse, in a matter of seconds. The point to contemplate is this: if a few drops of nicotine can kill a large animal like a horse then, how poisonous is nicotine and will it not poison a human being who takes tobacco. People who drink severely are affected by epilepsy and seizures. Medical experts have estimated that these poisons act as slow poisons that reduce the lifespan of the user by 15 to 25 years. In India alone, diseases caused through tobacco use directly kill 500,000 people. Cigarette use if left unchecked will cause around 10 million deaths annually by the year 2030. This is the death toll from tobacco and does not include the deaths caused by use of alcohol or other drugs.

Today, WHO (world health organisation), UNICEF, IMEF, etc and governments are particularly worried by the increasing use of cigarettes. Where smokers are destroying and damaging their health are a cause for concern, health organisations of the world are more worried about the health risk posed by “Second hand smoke” (smoke exhaled by smokers). The risk of getting cancer from smoke exhaled by smokers is much higher to those sitting or sharing space near smokers. Governments, charitable and non governmental health organisations have campaigned vigorously to have smoking banned from all public places like restaurants, airports, stations and all work places because the risk of getting cancer from second hand smoke is greater than smoking directly. Strict laws, penalties and fines are imposed to enforce the law for the safety of the public. Many western countries apply their ban on smoking in public strictly, yet in India, even though the law exists on paper, it has never been implemented. Thus, the ordinary man on the street is ignored and their health is not safeguarded by the state.

(iii) Destruction Of Wealth

A human being has three basic needs, described by wise people as food, shelter and clothing. Food and nourishment to stay alive, clothes to protect oneself from hot and cold weather and shelter to house us from the elements. These three necessities can only be obtained by wealth. Every human works day and night to accumulate money to acquire these three necessities. People work in numerous jobs from farming, trading, shops, business or manual labour, to meet their basic need of food, shelter and clothing. Behind this daily grind and toil is the need to earn wealth for the three basic needs of food, shelter and clothing.

When one is unfortunate, past destiny results in a person coming into the society of those who take drugs or alcohol. Either due to naivety, peer pressure, ignorance or aping others' behaviour, a person can fall prey to addiction to alcohol or drugs. Once addicted and having become dependant on intoxicants, a person sows the seed for their eventual destruction. Dependence on intoxicants makes a person lazy and pleasure seeker. Such a person shirks responsibility and shuns work of any kind. Addiction to drugs or alcohol produces lasting intoxication due to which, a person cannot work, as their senses are disrupted. A pleasure seeker in drugs shirks work and their absence from work or inability to perform their job causes a drop in their

income. People who use intoxicants do not reduce their expenditure in line with their reduced income. Their needs and expenditure remain the same yet their income is reduced or the expenditure on drugs in fact goes too high. Addicts will use their savings to meet the need for drugs in addition to their daily expenditure on basic needs like food, shelter and clothing. After squandering their own wealth, such a person will turn to spending their parents or family wealth and property in order to fuel their addiction to drugs. In selling their parents or family property an addict has less remorse, as they have not worked hard to accumulate or save money to build family property or savings. One day comes when the addict has nothing to sell except himself or herself and they become bankrupt. Wise people say that eating uncontrollably one can even empty a well full of food. It is easier to eat through a well full of food but to fill it in the first place is far harder. To this day one has witnessed addicts destroying their wealth, not accumulating it. Addicts have only been seen to empty wells not fill them. To date there is no person who can be shown to have been addicted to intoxicants and amassed wealth in equal measure. One can safely assume that once intoxicants get a foothold in a family, their eventual destruction begins from that day forth. In order to avoid destruction of our wealth, safeguard our invaluable human life and gain respect in society, we should always abstain from intoxicants of all kinds.

(iv) Destruction Of Social Standing And Stature

Every human wants to live with respect and obtain social stature amongst his or her community. To gain greater respect and social stature people make friends amongst influential people, rich business people, politicians, celebrities and the like. People build beautiful, lavish houses and amass wealth in order to obtain social standing and respect. As such, people join clubs and charitable organisations to further enhance their social stature and get respect from others in society. Often people undertake the above activities solely to attract adoration of others.

We often see people in our lives who have lavish houses, rich and influential friends, and positions of power in various organisations and undertake charitable work. However, if such a person indulges in drugs or alcohol, then they are respected less and less. Such a person may be praised on their face, yet behind their back, people will denounce them for their addiction to illicit substances. People will often say that, look at this person who gives charity in the day yet, at night drinks or uses drugs. They will call such a person, a hypocrite who, lectures others during the day and indulges in drugs or alcohol at night. Such a person is denounced as unreliable and two faced in being one thing at daytime and another when under the influence of intoxicants at night.

People now drink alcohol and smoke whilst watching indecent, obscene songs or films in front of their family and children. If we look back even a few decades ago, people who drank alcohol would not come in front of their family until they had sobered up, such was the shame of drinking alcohol let alone drinking in front of the family members. Nowadays, under the influence of so-called western culture, we drink with our family, justifying this action as social drinking. We have abandoned our glorious culture, history and social etiquette, becoming enslaved to western culture. No doubt, times have changed so that bad habits have now become socially acceptable. Yet, let us not be fooled, as one needs to remember that deep down, no one respects or trusts the word of an addict. Under the influence of intoxicants, a person becomes lazy and slothful. No one admires or respects an idle or slothful person. Only hardworking, industrious people get respect, praise, and admiration and

will do so in the future. Today, we need to abstain from using intoxicants that affect our sanity, reducing our consciousness. In so doing we can live with self-respect and will power thus attracting the admiration of our peers and gaining respect in society. By remembering god, we can become intoxicated with love for god. We can become true addicts to the worship of god almighty. This addiction is without equal pleasure and has only one effect uniting us with our infinite lord. In this manner we can save our present life and gain respect in the afterlife too.

(v) Intoxicants Are An Obstacle In Relationships And Marriages

Every parent's heart felt wish is to find a partner for their child who is noble and good so that they can live happily married lives, supporting their parents in old age and taking over the household responsibilities. We often see that before deciding on a marriage proposal parents check out the personal and financial status of the bride or groom. They will enquire about the education, income, family status and temperament of the prospective groom or bride. Even if a man comes from a well off family, is of good nature, has good education and a good job but the groom is found to be indulging in intoxicants then, parents of the bride will steer clear of such a marriage proposal. Why would parents change their mind from marrying their daughter to such a person? Parents would freely admit that they would not have minded the groom having less property or lesser job but a family where the son is addicted to drugs would be a living hell for their daughter. Instead of their daughter having a secure future, such a groom would likely sell the family property for his own addiction. Such a groom would bring shame on the their family too. The addiction to intoxicants thus results in failure of marriages and proposals for marriage. In the same vein, if the grooms' parents find out the bride to be is a substance abuser then despite the girl being beautiful, well educated, from a well off family and with great job prospects the grooms side would reject her. Even if they marriage has been agreed and someone happens to blow the whistle on the girls habit of using intoxicants then the parents and the groom himself will reject the match. What is the reason for the proposal being rejected? Answer: use of drugs and alcohol.

The point to consider and think about is this; good looks, good education, good job, well off family, good mannerisms and temperament all become irrelevant and overshadowed by the habit of substance abuse. Intoxicants and addiction to them destroy relationships, prevent relationships and make marriages a living hell.

(vi) Intoxicants Enslave One Through Addiction

In their daily life, a slave finds that freedom has taken wings and flown away. A slaves thinking, aspiration and aim becomes limited to pleasing his or her master. In order to please the master, a slave will gamble away their respect, life and well-being. Similarly, a person who is addicted to drugs or alcohol becomes enslaved by the intoxicant and will gamble or trade their family, wealth, health, self-respect and social standing to fuel their habit. The need to take their drug becomes the only aim of the addict. To obtain their drug, an addict will sell their property, land, possessions and even the household furniture and belongings. An addict will sell drugs themselves, rob, beg or steal in order to satisfy their addiction. They will resort to any degrading action including prostitution and human trafficking in order to score drugs or alcohol. He or she does not care about peers, family or opinions of society when indulging in drugs. They will not be responsible or concerned about their children or parents. The only worry or aim an addict has is towards gaining their drug or intoxicant. A person addicted to drugs is unable to take or heed advice from peers,

elders, well-wishers or friends. Such a person cannot judge what will cause them loss or gain. The only reasoning that he or she listens to, is that of their weakened, enfeebled mind which, is addicted to drugs. An addict ends up having no direction in their life. Their psychological reasoning and well-being becomes coloured by their addiction such that they themselves do not know how they have become addicted. An addict cannot differentiate between reality and their alternate addicted personality. Just as if trapped in a dream or nightmare, they are unable to extract themselves from the slavery of addiction. Their thoughts revolve around the need to score some more drugs. Enslaved by their addiction, their only pursuit is to find their artificial and imaginary happiness from the next fix of drugs.

(vii) Drug Users Become Criminals Filling Up Courts And Prisons

As guru Arjan Dev ji tell us, only human life has been blessed with the seed and potential of emancipation through naam meditation. God has given humans the potential to be fully conscious above all other creation, which only has enough intelligence to gather food and carry out basic functions of life. God has blessed humans with the apex position in creation. We have been given the power of thought, reasoning, wisdom, morality, intellect to differentiate good from evil and ultimately the potential for self realisation and opportunity to become one with the lord almighty. Before any action, every human should use their god given wisdom and mind to judge the consequences of their actions. Sri guru Nanak dev ji says

aklee saahib sayvee-ai aklee paa-ee-ai maan.

Wisdom leads us to serve our Lord and Master; through wisdom, honor is obtained.

aklee parh^h kai bujhee-ai aklee keechai daan.

Wisdom does not come by reading textbooks; wisdom inspires us to give in charity.

Salok 1st guru, p1284

Before conducting any action, every human being has a deep-seated inner voice that guides our action. This is called the voice of the soul or our conscience. The person who steadfastly, attentively and with wisdom listens to this inner voice, commits no sinful actions and is able to avoid doing wrong. The one who ignores this inner voice or overrides it, is unable to avoid sinful or wrong actions. In the prayer of sukhmani, Guru Arjan dev ji describe that person as.

Animal actions of base instinct committed by a human

Because despite having wisdom, intellect and intelligence such a person still commits sinful actions of ignorance. Some times a person is hell bent upon committing a sinful action but their inner voice is very strong and doesn't let them proceed with such a mistake. This voice of the soul, arising from deep within, obstructs the person from following their lower mind but they still resort to drinking or drug use in order to override this voice of the conscience. This is because the intoxicating effect of drugs or alcohol dumbs down the senses, brings about a reduced consciousness and finally stifles this inner voice. By taking the aid of intoxicants, a person is able to shut up the voice of the soul and disable the power of intellect. In such a state, they are not able to distinguish between right and wrong action. Unable to judge right from wrong, good from bad, one commits any number of sinful actions.

Once the effect of alcohol or drugs wears off then there is only remorse for any sinful action carried out under the influence. By now it is too late and only the headache of dealing with the police and law courts beckons. People addicted to intoxicants waste their whole lives coming in and out of prison or courts. A large number of crimes like theft, robbery, murder rape, smuggling, fraud, domestic violence, prostitution and drug trafficking etc. is fuelled by or directly due to, drug or alcohol use. Any day of the week one can see prisons, courts and police station full of people convicted or being arrested for drug or alcohol related crime. In every country, especially in the west, youth and young kids are part of drug gangs that regularly appear in the news for having committed murder or violence. These gangs are recruiting grounds for young kids as they traffic drugs and arms to youngsters. These drug members will commit any crime for the right sum of money. If one of the members decides to leave the gang then, the rest of the gang gets together to murder him or her. Drugs that make one half insane and kill the intellect are the main reason for the increased violence and crime in society. The use of drugs or alcohol fuels crime, which fills up police cells, prisons and courts. Worse, it has a devastating effect on the family and society in that it causes untold misery and unhappiness to those around such addicts. Addiction decimates families, relationships, wealth, property, self-respect and social standing all in one go.

(viii) Drug And Alcohol Use Cause Accidents And Death

When travelling the roads, especially in India, every 25 or 30 miles one can see a road traffic accident where a truck, bus or car has overturned or been crushed in an accident. A look in the daily newspaper will reveal a number of daily accidents where people or whole families have died in accidents on the road. There are daily reports on the news in all the media, of people having perished or seriously injured in accidents, being admitted to hospital. On a national level, there are possibly thousands of such accidents caused by the negligence of drunk or drug using drivers. According to accident site surveys, 85% of road traffic accidents are due to drivers having been drunk or under the influence of drugs. In order to drive for longer periods, stay alert and ward off tiredness, taxi and truck drivers take a whole range of drugs or alcohol. Taxi drivers and bus or truck drivers can easily get these drugs at any number of roadside café's, rest houses or petrol stations. They have a specified name for every type of drug in their own coded language. At the right gesture from the driver, the waiters at these roadside cafés will discreetly bring a glass of water and the specified drug, without the passengers ever finding out. As soon as the driver takes the drug, he feels relieved of tiredness but also slips into a half conscious state of mind, which is dangerous for driving. In this intoxicated, half conscious state, a driver will speed and ignore traffic rules on the road. Without any care or attention for oncoming traffic, the driver will not only speed but also overtake traffic recklessly. In such manoeuvres, often accidents happen and other road users perish with their lives.

Even if a person wants to avoid having an accident, one cannot avoid being hit by such intoxicated drivers. Often you will see a blurb on the back of their trucks and taxis that reads " God save you." It is an apt caption because if you are in their path you are at the mercy of God only. Such drivers do not guarantee their own safety or that of other road users. If a law abiding person driving on the right side of the road, is overtaken from behind or on-coming traffic happened to be driven by a drugged up driver, results in an accident then, it is often the case, that the innocent driver suffers considerable damage to their vehicle not to mention any physical injury. In such a

situation, the cause of the accident and the blame lies with the intoxicated driver yet the innocent driver suffers loss without reason.

Here I would like to mention a personal incident that happened back on 6th December 2006. I was travelling in my Toyota Innova car from Delhi towards Punjab. My driver was driving the car in a steady manner near a place called Rahon. A young man, about 35 years old, on a royal Enfield motorcycle, was coming towards us at very high speed overtaking vehicles furiously. We witnessed him hitting a pedal rickshaw. The impact broke the rickshaw in two and flung the rickshaw driver and the motorcyclist spinning several times over, onto the side of the road. The motorcyclist turned out to be drunk and landed badly, losing consciousness after impacting his head as well as breaking a leg and both arms. The rickshaw puller received several flesh injuries and bruises. The motorcycle uncontrollably bounced over to our side of the road and hit our nearly new car. The car was damaged badly and the impact broke the front bumper, radiator, lights and the cooling system. The cost of repairs was 165000 rupees to put the car right. After the police asked questions, it emerged the motorcyclist worked in a band and had come from a marriage palace that day after attending a marriage. He had been given free alcohol at the wedding where, he was playing in the band. After getting drunk at the wedding, he was on his way home when this accident took place. A few hours were spent to find a petrol pump where the car could be parked and we could arrange a taxi home. It cost 1500 rupees for the taxi fare and by midnight, we had arrived back home. It is worth contemplating that by drinking free liquor this person put a poor rickshaw puller in the hospital for several days and upset that person's only method to earn a livelihood. Personally, he broke his arms and legs, scrapped a new motorcycle and was now disabled for the rest of his life. Apart from that, we suffered a loss of 165000 rupees simply because we were passing by in the opposite direction innocently, not to mention all the head ache of getting the car fixed and finding our way home at late night. God knows how many innocent passers-by get injured or involved in road traffic accidents and suffer loss both financial and physical as collateral damage of accidents caused by drunk drivers. Such drivers who drink or take drugs before driving, do not care for their own lives or for those of their passengers or even the people who are around them on the same road. They have a death wish and end up taking many others to their death along with themselves. The government has advertised on billboards along roadsides warning drivers not to take drugs or drink and drive. However, a large number of people ignore the law, as they drink and drive. People disregard the law because it is not enforced properly. If a policeman does stop a driver who is under the influence of drink, they too will ignore the crime if they are presented with the right money in their hand. Sometimes it feels like laws are meant for those who obey the law or follow them. Those who break the law seem to be above it and immune to the law. This is a truly sorry state of affairs.

(ix) Intoxicants Destroy Good Deeds And The Afterlife.

This world is like a hotel. People are constantly coming and going. Our forefathers came here from somewhere, stayed for a while and after a time checked out for the afterlife. Like our forefathers, we too have come from somewhere or some source. We will live here for a period ordained by God and then return to our source. In gurbani, these two places or worlds are called by various names like halat-palat, (meaning here and hereafter). Guru ji has addressed the mortal about the present world and the hereafter that O beings! Remember your lord almighty. This world is

not permanent. It is finite and your life is of limited time. Everyone will leave this world when it is his or her turn.

saahib simrahu mayray bhaa-eeho sabhnaa ayhu pa-i-aanaa.

Meditate in remembrance on the Lord and Master, O my Siblings of Destiny; everyone has to pass this way.

aythai DhanDhaa koorhaa chaar dihaa aagai sarpar jaanaa.

These false entanglements last for only a few days; then, one must surely move on to the world hereafter

saahib sam^Haalih panth nihaalih asaa bhe othai jaanaa.

Let us remember the Lord and Master in contemplation, and keep a watchful eye on the Path. We shall have to go there as well.

Vadhans 1st guru, p579

Sinful deeds committed or intoxicants taken in this life erase our good deeds and damage our afterlife. All our wilful misdeeds, committed under the influence of intoxicants in this life, destroy our after life. Although atheists say that, no one has seen the hereafter and only this world exists so enjoy it while the party lasts. However those who have true spiritual insight proclaim, in the strongest terms that the hereafter is indeed, true. Such spiritual people tell us mortals to heed the advice of gurbani because; the words uttered by gifted saints are based on what they have seen with their own eyes. . Guru Arjan dev ji says ...

santan kee sun saachee saakhee.

Listen to the true story of the Saints.

Jo boleh jo paykheh aakhee.

They speak only of what they see with their eyes.

Ramkali 5th, p894

Concerning what is seen and described; Guru Amar das ji himself describes the truth about intoxicants. He says that, "O worldly people! by drinking alcohol our mind become insane and the intellect destroyed. The power to differentiate between good and bad, friend or foe is destroyed. By indulging in intoxicants, one suffers rejection in god's court and separation from god himself. One is denounced in the afterlife and one undergoes horrific punishment in the afterlife." Bhagat Kabir ji through meditation on the divine lord received knowledge of this life and the afterlife. He also attained to the status of salvation such that he was inseparable from the lord almighty. In order to guide us throughout our lives, in a god centred way, he left us with numerous invaluable teachings. Kabir ji says that those who eat meat, take intoxicants lose all the spiritual benefits gained through religious penances, pilgrimages and austerities.

kabeer bhaa^Ng maachhulee suraa paan jo jo paraanee khaa^Nhi.

Kabeer, those mortals who consume marijuana, fish and wine

tirath barat^N naym kee-ay tay sabhai rasaatal jaa^Nhi.

- no matter what pilgrimages, fasts and rituals they follow, they will all go to hell

Salok Bhagat Kabir ji, p1377

Guru Arjan dev ji tell us mortals not to be infantile in our actions. He warns us not to take intoxicants, as their use, pollutes the intellect and brings on insanity. Guru ji tells us not to wilfully and naively waste this precious human life indulging in intoxicants...

hochhaa mad^N chaakh^N ho-ay tum baavar dulabh^N janam akaarath.

You taste the weak, insipid wine, and you have gone insane. You have uselessly wasted this precious human life.

ray nar aisee karahi i-aanath.

O man, such is the foolishness you practice.

Maru 5th guru, p1001

In the Hindu religious text called the Puran, tobacco and other intoxicants are prohibited vigorously. The one who uses these intoxicants destroys all the benefit of good deeds. The use of intoxicants is described as the root of all evil and cause one to visit hell and damnation. If we heed the advice and take action on the words of our gurus or saints then, we stand to benefit. If we ignore or don't listen to the words of our gurus then we are the one's who will lose out.

Negligence of our duty

(i) Neglect Of Duty By Parents

All those who had a responsibility to warn, educate and save our young generations from the curse of addiction to intoxicants either shirked or became negligent to their duty. Firstly, it is the duty of the parents to educate and guide their children away from the effects and clutches of intoxicants. However, parents nowadays are too busy trying to earn money or spend all their time in activities other than their children's education. Parents ignore their children, who are their real wealth. The children will inherit their hard earned wealth, look after their legacy, and use the family wealth for the good of the whole family. Parents have no time to educate, enlighten their children to the true path. Those parents who sit twice a day with their children to teach them good values and teach them about their religious heritage are few and far between. Those parents, who warn their children to the dangers of intoxicants, guide their children towards their true religion and teach them right from wrong find their efforts are rewarded successfully. Those parents who ignore their duty or are negligent in warning their children about the dangers of intoxicants, bad company and bad deeds, often find that their children end up in bad company, indulging in illicit substances and drugs.

Some parents make excuses that they have no time to sit with their children due to work, or other commitments. Our life in this world is such that we have to make time for the essential things or activities that are of benefit to us. For example, a newborn child is helpless to the point that its parents have to look after all its needs, be they changing clothes, feeding or taking it to school. In fact, until the child is not old enough parents take care of all of his or her needs and responsibilities. When a child goes to school, parents take out time to drop off and pick up the child at school. To take a child to extra tuition lessons, to school or take them to sports activities parents have the time. However to give children a few lessons in religious principles or guidance about what is good or wrong company or telling them to avoid the evils of intoxication, parents supposedly have no time. As parents have no time to show their children the evils affects of substance abuse and to teach them right from wrong, children miss the opportunity to have the seeds of spiritual or moral courage sown in them. Watching TV and cartoons sows the seeds of behaviour based on the guidance obtained from the TV media. These TV programs become the basis of their future actions. We all know that TV and film media is make believe, with no direction to give us in spiritual matters. Today we need to take responsibility for our children and to educate them towards spirituality and enlightened behaviour.

It would be naïve and foolish of us to expect religious organisations or preachers to take responsibility to teach our children about the evils of intoxication. If we then blame them for the failure of our children to learn the right values, we will betray our lack of responsible behaviour. We ourselves must take charge of educating our children to the dangers of substance abuse and instil in them the right moral values. The day we take charge of educating our children and awaken within them awareness for their great religious tradition, significant results of our effort will begin to emerge. If we keep looking to others, expecting them to teach our children the right moral values and then blaming others if they do not, then we will see the state of affairs that is around us set to continue as it is. By not taking charge of our children's moral and religious education, the present epidemic will continue. Today we need to guide our children on to the path laid by our guru's. We need to teach them about

their great religion and its legacy to the world. We need to give them spiritual tools to avoid the trap of intoxicants. We must make time to educate them about the ill effects of drugs and alcohol and in so doing we stand to benefit as well as our country. If we neglect our duty to educate the children of their great heritage, then history will witness our subsequent generations breaking away from our great legacy and religious tradition.

(ii) Lack Of Character And Moral Education By Teachers

The first teachers a child has are its parents. After their first contact with parents, the second most important interaction occurs with teachers at school or nursery. By learning from teachers, children pick up a lot of information from the way their teachers speak, behave and conduct themselves. A large majority of teachers have turned away from their responsibility to teach and lead their students correctly. Most teachers have limited their job to a means of earning a living rather than a duty to bring up the future generation. Some teachers themselves are regular users of alcohol; tobacco and drugs, so are not able to guide their students in the avoidance of intoxicants. As users of intoxicants, their willpower is weak because of which their inner self has no conviction or strength to oppose or impress the point that using drugs is wrong or immoral. Even if they pick up courage or are forced by their roles as teachers to educate children about the evils of drug use, they lack a sense of conviction in their message, which the children do not accept. As Guru Arjan dev ji says **First enlighten your mind with wisdom thereafter convince others.** The words of those people carry weight and are effectual who, themselves are fully convinced and enlightened to the ill effects of intoxicants. What effects will the words of that person who has fallen from virtue or moral conduct have on others? A person who does not practice what he or she preaches, have no conviction in their words. As gurbani says...**Preaching to others yet not practice them self...** such a persons word carry no effect or weight. Today children need the services of those teachers who have high moral conviction and virtues. They need teachers who practice and mean what they teach. Teachers devoid of virtuous and moral characteristics have resulted in children being denied an effective education against the use of intoxicants, eventually falling prey to their use. Children have thus been denied moral guidance from their morally irreverent teachers. The next generation grows up only to fall into the clutches of intoxicants. Teachers should realise their responsibility to educate children in the avoidance of intoxicants. Teachers should lift their own lifestyle to its virtuous heights thus giving their message moral conviction and weight. In this way, children and the teacher both benefit from education.

(iii) Abandoning Religious Sentiment And Institutions

When talking to today's modern sikh youth one hears them say that, we should be a good person, lead a good life and what is the need to go to the gurdwara or temple? This is like a teacher telling someone that it is good to get a master's degree but what is the need to go to school? People who give such false advice do not appreciate that to get a higher degree, one first has to go to school to get an education let alone get a masters degree. Another excuse given for not going to the gurdwara is that there are too many fights at the temple and this affects the children badly. This too is a mental construct and poor excuse for not taking the right action. Occasionally, a few haughty or self-centred people may well fight at the gurdwara but not every day. A true Sikh with respect for the guru will not even speak loud in the presence of the Guru Granth sahib, let alone fight at the gurdwara. Even if we agree

with this point that fights take place at the gurdwara, then is also not true that we have fights between various family members at home too? Is it not true that fights happen in party halls, nightclubs, pubs and community centres during social occasions like parties and weddings? Do not gangs have fights in amusement arcades and shopping malls? Do children or students not fight at school, parks and in classrooms? Which place is there where fights do not occur? Despite fights at party halls, do we stop attending parties? Despite fights at weddings, do we not go to weddings? Have we stopped going to cinemas and amusement arcades? Have we stopped going to schools or sending our children to school where fights happen regularly? Are we ready to abandon the family because there are fights in the family? No at all! It is only because we ourselves do not want to go to the gurdwara or take the child that we make such excuses, which is not beneficial for us. We ourselves should go to the gurdwara and take our children too. We should answer our child's question with a worthy answer that our religion does not allow fighting, especially in front of the guru because Guruji teaches us that... **We all are the children of one god; all are alike to you our father** and that.... **All are my friends and I a friend to everyone.** Those who fight are devoid of the guru's message and mischievous. Even though they look religious in their appearance, they are miles away from the guru's message. Whenever one visits a religious place or gurdwara, one should go with the attitude of a honeybee. A honeybee can extract the nectar from a poisonous flower. We should abandon the attitude that is similar to the character of an ant. An ant will look for cracks even in the most expensive marble floor. If we go to Gurdwara's with the attitude of an ant then we will gain nothing. As we should go to the temple with the attitude described by Guru Amar das ji that... **Chose to share merits and virtues, leave behind and consider not faults or demerits.** It is at the temple that we will be blessed with the guidance of spiritual conduct and moral virtues. It is here we will be given the lessons of gurbani that tells us... **Do not drink alcohol, which destroys the merits of our afterlife...**or that. ...**Drinking alcohol one commits and gets the fruit of many sins.** If we have the attitude of a honeybee, learning the perfect teachings of our guru and helping our children to practice these lessons too, then we will have saved our family aswell and ourselves.

(iv) The Lack Of Health Education

This is the age when electronic media is supreme. Media can advertise dust as gold and it will sell like gold and gold can be sold for the price of dust. Such is the influence of the media upon our lives that poison can be shown to be like nectar yet nectar can be defamed into being poison and no one will touch nectar. Today tobacco and liquor companies spend millions of pounds recruiting actors and sports personalities to advertise their products. The advertising industry makes these advertisements so seductive that poisonous chemicals are presented as lifestyle enhancing products, supposedly giving us physical ability, vitality and willpower! On the other hand, there is little or no effort in advertising the ill effects of drugs and alcohol on our health or the damage it does to our spiritual, mental and physical well-being. There is little media effort to warn people of the dangers of intoxicants. As a result, millions of people are falling into the quagmire of addiction to intoxicants.

Despite there being national no smoking days and tee-total days in most countries, the media is ineffective at stopping these habits. Why? Because most of the activity is limited to newspaper advertising, discussions within some intellectual circles and short news items only.

It is a new trend that people are becoming more health conscious. If these people were shown graphically and vividly, the ill effects on the body of drug and alcohol abuse, then people in droves would take no time in giving up intoxicants. It only requires a concerted, genuine, heartfelt and well-intentioned effort in the form of a national campaign. There is great power in advertising through the media. I will give a couple of examples about the power of giving health messages through modern media that happened a few years ago to highlight my assertion. For the past few decades, soft drink companies like coca cola etc. have constantly and without any consideration to cost, advertised their cold drinks to the point where every child was hooked on them in India. So large was the demand for soft drinks that these companies could not satisfy it. A few years ago, the environment ministry carried out test on the water used in these soft drinks by coca cola. They found high levels of pesticide in coca cola and the water used in making coca cola. The matter was referred to the parliament of India. All coca cola bottles were removed from parliament and huge headlines in newspapers and the TV appeared showing the high levels of pesticide found in coca cola. Suddenly, people gave up drinking soft drinks and they only drank and served water or home made natural lemon squash. Coca cola was reduced to half price and adverts in the media reassuring the consumers that pesticide levels had been reduced to below government standards did not stem the fall in sales of coca cola. No one was willing to drink coca cola and the company lost millions of pounds in revenue.

The poultry industry suffered a similar fate too. A couple of winters ago chicks in some poultry farms got bird flu. Those who ate infected chickens suffered symptoms of flu as well. A few people died because of the bird flu. The media advertised the stories and effects of bird flu. In a matter of days, people stopped eating chicken. Poultry that was about 65 rupees, now no one was even willing to buy it at 10 rupees. Poultry farmers and businesses were left on the brink of collapse. The poultry industry collectively paid to have research done on their chickens to get a clean bill of health from the agriculture ministry. They then paid large sums of money to advertise the ministry findings and tell the consumer it was safe to eat their chickens. Slowly confidence was restored and their businesses started to recover. My reason in mentioning the above two incidents is to highlight the power of preaching or advertising health message through the media be it radio, newspaper, magazines, Internet or TV. If the ill effects on our health of drug and alcohol use are advertised prolifically in the media then there is no reason why people will use intoxicants after learning about the destructive effects of drug abuse. People will certainly stop using intoxicants once they learn how devastating their effect on health is. There is only a lack of heartfelt propagation of the message that intoxicant use is harmful. Today the message is being advertised for self-gratification or self-promotion. Only a few charitable organisations and community minded individuals are honestly propagating the message that intoxicants are harmful. Fewer still are involved in rehabilitation of affected individuals. Those few who are genuinely promoting the message of abstinence are but a drop in the ocean in terms of media presence, which is advertising liquor and tobacco on a wide scale. As such, these individuals or organisations meet with limited success.

(v) Government Lethargy And Negligence

After the role of parents, teachers, media, religious and community organisations, the government is responsible for the health education and

needs of the people. The government has much larger resources and the means to bring about change in the lives of its citizens. The spectre of addiction and intoxicants cannot stand in front of the might of a government resolved whole-heartedly to eradicating the evils of drug use. However, the governments of the world are double minded in their will and actions. The government is more concerned with revenue and profit from sales of liquor and tobacco than the well-being and health of the citizens that elected them. How laughable is it that, the revenue from sales of alcohol and tobacco is exceeded several times over by the expenditure on the health problems created from addiction and use of intoxicants. How unwise is it that first, the use of intoxicants is promoted to collect taxes and then several times the revenue collected is spent treating diseases created by drug and alcohol usage. How mesmerising is this juggling act of health of the citizens and revenue, which has bamboozled the intellectuals of the land. The government is playing with the health and mental well being of its citizens.

Many a time people vent their anger and many frustrations at the inaction of the government. Such actions are limited to expressing and venting our emotions and soiling our mouth, that's all. Calling the government names or denouncing the government is of no benefit. You and I all know that the government did not drop from the skies. The government is but a collective of those people we call politicians, whom we elected ourselves. They sit on their seat of power for four and half years amassing wealth and power. Six months before election these politicians knock door-to-door begging for your votes, promising any number of things in order to get your vote. They spend vast amounts of money to advertise their party and intentions. Once elected, all that remains are their promises and intentions. Besides a few, most politicians are widely considered to be motivated by their greed for power. Most people know that in order to get votes, politicians will say anything, speak any number of lies, spend any amount of money, orchestrate violence and in India especially, distribute any amount of liquor or intoxicants to secure votes. They will buy power at whatever the price. Governments elected by us in such circumstances cannot be expected to suddenly awaken to the task of uplifting the well-being and health status of its population. We will be in dreamland for thinking that a politician who uses illicit means to be elected, to then start working towards the selfless service of the electorate. A politician will only work towards that task of health promotion or service of the community that will secure votes or popularity. A power greedy politician will never adopt any health promotion, policy or community project, which is unpopular or threatens the vote bank of a politician. Those countries that have genuinely implemented policies and effort to stem the rise in drug use have met with success as well as benefiting the well being of the nation. Our government too needs to implement policies and target the rise in addiction by awakening people to the damaging effects of intoxicants through the media. There needs to be a ban on tobacco and liquor advertising in all media. If a concerted policy is not developed to stem the rising tide of drug use then not nuclear war, but drug use, will bring widespread devastation in society. This problem needs urgent attention and diligent thought in order to solve it.

What Should Be Done Now?

There is no task in the world that cannot be accomplished, neither is there such a problem that cannot be solved. Sometimes problems or tasks become so difficult or tangled that in order to perform such difficult tasks or solve these problems one has to spend extra effort, time and strength. However, no problem exists that does not have a solution. We need to have fortitude and not lose heart in attempting this task. Now, we should not waste time in apportioning blame and denouncing others. The degradation due to addiction to intoxicants in our society, the profound but serious consequences of which will appear in our forthcoming generation, need to be addressed urgently. To resolve the disfigured state in which we find our society, we need to work collectively. From the individual to village level and from village to the district level if we collectively mobilise ourselves and resolve to beat the demon of addiction then we can turn the task that would take years into that of a few months. We will see that in a short while, our society will become free of addictive substances and their abuse. However, this task will not be accomplished by mere lip service, discussion or idle talk. Neither will a few well meaning but half hearted advertisements in newspapers address the problem of addictive substance abuse. A great effort will need to be put into accomplishing this task. What needs to be done will be considered next.

1) Firstly in every village or neighbourhood 5 to 7 well meaning, upstanding, wise and considerate elders need to be organised into a committee. A few youths from the area should also be included. All the committee members should then invite all households in the village or neighbourhood to a fixed venue on a mutually acceptable date. The present abuse of drugs amongst the community and the ill effects of addiction to such substances should be discussed openly with the gathered community. Recommendations and suggestions to stem the tide of addiction to intoxicants must then be invited from the concerned citizens. Useful suggestions can be adopted and put into action with the agreement of the rest of the community. Everyone should collectively agree to put the recommendations into action and promise to carry out the agreed action plan. Every one should then return at least monthly to discuss, in a civilised manner and without prejudice, any shortfall in the action planned during the previous month

. A plan can be implemented to address any shortcomings in taking action against addiction and drug abuse in that area. In this way, a continuous interaction and dialogue is kept going between the elders and the youth of the community. Any obstacles in eradicating the use of drugs can be discussed and solved by mutual dialogue and consent. In this way, a positive outcome can be expected in the battle against widespread drug abuse.

2) At village level, money should be collected or funding secured in order to establish health clubs, sports gyms and buy sports equipment. This is so that the youth in the area can spend its spare time in the pursuit of physical activities, competitive sports and personal health development. This type of a project can be run by a responsible youth from the community

3) At village level, apart from setting up sports clubs or grounds, every effort should be made to provide or build a library, which should have books on religion, history, spirituality and character development. The local youth should be encouraged to use the library and read the books provided. Literature and pamphlets

on religion, social and personal development should be placed in libraries for the youth to read. Younger children can partake in distributing the pamphlets and literature in the community and from house to house.

4) In every gurdwara, daily prayers of the nitnem must be recited. Some time should be made available for meditation and hymn singing. If a suitable singer is not available then someone from the local youth can be encouraged to read from Sikh history or even perform kirtan. It is essential that a little time is spent discussing and explaining the sermon from Guru Granth Sahib ji too. By listening to the explanation of gurbani and history, the intellect is uplifted and the seeds of spirituality are sown in the mind.

5) With agreement, two days including a Sunday should be set aside when the youth can gather to express their concerns or difficulties that they face in their lives. The elder people or someone from outside can be appointed to address the issues and concerns of the youth. The young people can thus have a forum where the elders of the community can answer their concerns or questions. In this manner, the younger generation will feel satisfied and not feel disaffected because the rest of the community is listening to their issues and trying to resolve their problems. This will remove the barriers between the generations, the youth can learn from the elders, and the elders can feel involved in guiding the younger generation. All in all the cooperation between the generations will be beneficial for the advancement of both the elders and the youth.

6) Those youngsters who are involved with drugs or alcohol or who have become addicted should be dealt with sympathetically and with kindness. Their personal problems should be given attention and their valid problems addressed. Next, a provision for rehabilitation through necessary medication and medical treatment should be sourced and made available to those who are addicted to drugs.

7) Every parent should spend at least 15 minutes a day explaining to their children the history of our religion, basic tenets of sikh dharma and what gurbani is revealing to us. The ill effects of bad company should be explained to children. Any questions children have should be explained with patience and to their satisfaction. This daily routine of religious education will help in sowing the seed of moral intellect in the minds of children.

8) Teachers should not just think of teaching children the required subject as their only duty. Teachers should educate children about avoiding drugs, the benefits of leading moral and ethical lives as good citizens of an inclusive society. As teachers are idolised by their students, they should aspire to and live moral lives themselves. If a teacher does indulge in drugs or alcohol then the head teacher or school board should deal firmly but sympathetically with the teacher. The teacher should be counselled to give up their intoxicant. They should be disciplined and rehabilitated so that they can lead a moral lifestyle. No compromise should be made on the principle or moral code of staying free from intoxicants

9) Charitable and community organisations are already carrying out worthwhile programmes. These organisations need to make a coordinated effort to coincide their actions and education of the communities they serve. Educational films, lectures and

seminars can be organised in every village so that the youth can be advised on the evils of drug use. These organisations can also distribute literature and have influential speakers give lectures to advise and educate the people of the area they serve.

10) Those who are well educated or at the forefront of education can write and disseminate the message about the evils of drug use in all the media. They can sway public opinion by writing and bringing prominence to the ill effects of intoxicants. These intellectuals can answer the most difficult questions posed by the youth and thereby convince those who indulge in drugs or alcohol about its detrimental affects. Those who have been blessed with the ability to speak eloquently in public should take to lecturing at public places to convince people about abstaining from all types of drugs.

11) Those who do not have the ability to speak, teach or educate others but have been blessed with wealth too have a role to play. Such wealthy people can provide funding for literature dissemination and sponsorship of anti-intoxicant campaigns. In this way, their wealth is used for charitable purposes for the betterment of society. Those who do not have the wealth to support such educational efforts can help physically by distributing literature from house to house. Because addiction to drugs affects everyone whether they are educated, wealthy or religious or not, the effort to eradicate addiction will have to come from all parts of our community. Addiction to illicit substances affects the youth from all strata of society and if not addressed urgently will pose a threat of epidemic proportion to society and indeed the nation.

12) This is the age of information where the media like TV, newspapers, film and Internet have become powerful instruments for disseminating knowledge. Through the power of the media, truth can be distorted to appear a lie and a lie can be propounded by the media as the truth. Gold can be deflated in value to no more than dust and vice versa. Those companies that have spent money on advertising have used the power of the media to sell their addictive products like alcohol and tobacco etc.. If those people incharge of various media companies resolve to advertise the ill effects of intoxicants and ban advertising of intoxicants on a daily basis then, the day when people will abandon addictive substances will not be far. If the truth about the evils of taking drugs and addiction are relayed to the public then the fruit of this media onslaught will result in the whole nation shunning addictive substances and successfully rising to a moral existence free from the evils of intoxicants. The whole of society and the upcoming youth will forever be indebted to the media and its owners.

13) People choose their government so that it can be entrusted with the ethical and efficient running of the country. Governments too need to put the interests of the people and country before its own. The government should enforce laws that have been passed by the judiciary that benefit the health of the people. The government of a country has power over media and the resources to fund education on a wide scale. If the government puts the health interests of the people foremost then it can enforce the laws banning advertising, selling and trading of intoxicants. Tighter control on the production and selling of intoxicants by the government will bring success within days and not years.

14) Occasionally, a time comes in one's life when neither the government, nor the community or family can help. At such a time, when a person has lost all hope, one can only turn to God almighty and fall in the feet of the true guru. As Bhagat Kabir ji says ...oopaar bhuja kar ma . When a person prays with deep faith and pure intention then their prayers are heard and god fulfils their hearts desire. Today it appears that the youth addicted to drugs is beyond the help of the government, family or the community. This problem of widespread addiction to intoxicants is fast becoming unmanageable by us. At this time, if there is a ray of hope then it is only our prayer in the feet of our lord almighty. Prayer in reverence and humility each day, for the whole of humanity, is the only answer....

mai taan deebaan toohai mayray su-aamee mai tuDh aagai ardaas.

**You alone are my strength, and my Court, O my Lord and Master;
unto You alone I pray.**

mai hor thaa-o naahee jis peh kara-o baynante mayraa dukh sukh tujh hee paas.

**There is no other place where I can offer my prayers; I can tell my
pains and pleasures only to You.**

Suhi 4t guru, p735

and

jagat jaland arukh lai jagat jalandaa rakh lai aapnee kirpaa Dhaar.

**The world is going up in flames - shower it with Your Mercy, and
save it!**

jit du-aarai ubrai titai lai hu ubaar.

Save it, and deliver it, by whatever method it takes.

Salok 3rd guru, p853

Guru's Way For A Tranquil And Content Lifestyle

God has blessed us with a body that has three basic needs. Wise people have identified these as food, shelter and clothing. All these basic needs in life require a certain amount of wealth. It is essential to work in order to earn wealth. Anyone who does not work or have a vocation will have to resort to begging or stealing. Both these deeds are not accepted in our religion or by society. In the eyes of Guru Nanak Dev ji, the person who steals or misappropriates wealth is guilty of a misdemeanour even if such a person is intelligent, good looking or wise. Such a person is shunned by society and in Gods court is considered worthless. No one attests or vouches for such a person. In gods court even prophets and guru will not vouch for them.

chor su-aali-o chor si-aanaa.

A thief may be handsome, and a thief may be wise,

khotay kaa mul ayk dugaanaa.

but he is still just a counterfeit coin, worth only a shell.

chor kee haamaa bharay na ko-ay.

No one will take responsibility for a thief.

chor kee-aa changa ki-o ho-ay.

How can a thief's actions be good

Dhanasari 1st guru, p662

To beg for one's livelihood is not accepted in gurmat (literally the guru's wisdom). In Guru Granth sahib ji, Bhagat Farid ji has a wonderful couplet. He prays to god almighty never to make him beg for help in front of others in order to meet his basic needs. He prays to god almighty to take away his life the day he has to beg for his livelihood. He prefers to die rather than beg for a living.

fareedaa baar paraa-i-ai baisnaa saa^N-ee mujhai na deh.

Fareed begs, O Lord, do not make me sit at another's door.

jay too ayvai rakhsee jee-o sareerahu layhi.

If this is the way you are going to keep me, then go ahead and take the life out of my body.

Salok Bhagat Farid ji, P1380

Guruji condemn ascetics renouncing wealth yet begging for food etc, He also warns us to beware of such people who call themselves gurus and yet come to beg from those very people who they seek to enlighten.

gur peer sadaa-ay mangan jaa-ay.

One who calls himself a guru or a spiritual teacher, while he goes around begging

taa kai mool na lagee-ai paa-ay.

- don't ever touch his feet.

Salok 1st guru, p1245

Guru Nanak dev ji gave credence and importance to the hard but honestly earned, simple bread of Bhai Laalo rather than the rich but inappropriately earned bread of Malak Bhago. Guru Nanak dev ji not only preached about the message of working for a living. He led the way practically by working as a storekeeper in the warehouse of Daulat Khan the governor of Sultanpur Lodhi. Guru Nanak dev ji then went in all four directions on 4 long journeys to preach the message of Sikhism to all. He then returned to Kartarpur and again began farming the land to earn his livelihood. Bhai Gurdas ji explains in his vaar below...

Then Baba(Nanak) returned to Kartarpur where he took off his robe of a renunciate

Putting on the dress of a householder he adorned splendidly a cot from where he preached his mission

Sodar rehras, arti were sung and japji was recited in the ambrosial hours

Bhai Gurda ji, Vaar 1 Pauri 38,

Guru ji showed practically the timetable that a person should follow in their daily routine. At Kartarpur, the entire congregation would gather a couple of hours before dawn for meditation. They would then recite Japji prayer together. Then people would return to till the land, to sow crops like rice and wheat. In the evening, after bathing, everyone would join to sing praises of the lord and cleanse their mind. In the evening, the prayers of Sodar Rehras and Sohila would be recited. The food produced in the fields was used to serve free food (Langar) in the guru's home. Thus, no one went hungry and those in need or who were poor could be fed as well. We are so far removed from the life that Guru Nanak dev ji showed us practically. By abandoning the life shown to us by guru ji, we now find countless stresses and problems surrounding us in our lives. To rid us of these mental stresses, people have resorted to taking intoxicants like tobacco and alcohol. This is the opposite way to achieving a content and tranquil lifestyle. The guru's way as Bhai Gurdas says is as follows...

Earn your livelihood honestly and with integrity. Give away a part to needy ones and feel blessed and happy. The guru's way is to earn an honest living, share your wealth with those in need and remember God for all the boons bestowed on us. In this manner, we will be able to defeat the demon of addiction.

Share Your Wealth And Donate A Part Of It

God has established the family of humanity. As destiny dictates, some are bestowed with more wealth than others. We see that families who share their problems, in times of adversity stand with each other, help one another monetarily, do not fight and stand shoulder to shoulder, live in harmony making their life heavenly. In families where jealousy of one another and envy results in bickering and leg pulling then despite all the wealth, such a family lives in hell because of all the strife. Guru has taught us that, ***We are all children of our one heavenly father who is our teacher too.*** This lesson was meant to inspire us to live as one family of humanity. This lesson was so that we all live in harmony as equals and enjoy peace between one and another. By helping those less fortunate than us and respect those who have more, we can bring equality and bliss amongst humanity. To build such a society in which we help one another, we need to cultivate the virtue of giving and donating. To nurture this virtue we will have to practice the act of donating our wealth. Those who have started to practice the message of guru Nanak dev ji that...

ghaal khaa-ay kichh hathahu day-ay.

One who works for what he eats, and gives some of what he has

naanak raahu pachhaaneh say-ay.

- O Nanak, he knows the Path

Salok 1st guru, p1245

...have enjoyed a different pleasure in their lives. Those fortunate Sikhs would enjoy sharing their last meal even when they had gone hungry for four days. Such Sikhs of old would sound the drums to announce the free kitchen and langar was open, even if they themselves had been hungry for several days. Even if their enemy came to sit in the line of the free kitchen then they would serve them as if their friend had arrived for a meal. The Sikhs of old would feel pleasure in giving their all to serve humanity. By donating a part of our earned wealth gives us an indescribable bliss. This is because when the need of one unfortunate than us is fulfilled their soul feels elated and blesses us, showering us with gratitude and in turn, they may turn to thank almighty as well. This blessing brings us bliss too. Further, by practicing charity we develop the virtue of donating our wealth too. Until we don't practice the virtue of charity, we cannot hope to achieve union with God because it is the character of the almighty to bestow and grant us our boons. Gurbani tells us that the character of God is to always give without wanting gratitude ...

daydaa day laiday thak paahi.

The Great Giver keeps on giving, while those who receive grow weary of receiving.

jugaa jugantar khaahee khaahi.

Throughout the ages, consumers consume

Japji 1st guru, p2

But God does not ask for thanks. The person who earns an honest living and develops the virtue of charity slowly converts their virtue into the characteristic of giving without reward. This is the character of godliness and brings us in tune with the character of our heavenly father. Bhai Gurdas ji too have mentioned that one should earn and give in charity but not want for thanks or gratitude in return.

The virtue of giving can only be practiced by those who have enshrined the message of gurbani which is to give without wanting gratitude yet thank the lord for the gift of being able to give in charity and the abundance bestowed by almighty god. Today we are happier hoarding wealth rather than giving in charity. Instead of serving others, we are happier for others to serve us. Guru ji has told us that to feed the needy amounts to putting money in the charity box. Today the rich feel they should be the beneficiaries of charitable wealth. Somehow, the topsy-turvy world finds the rich filling their coffers instead of feeding the poor. Today we need to enshrine the principles laid down by our gurus and practice the way enlightened by Guruji.

Mediatate on the name of God (Naam)

We all want everlasting comfort. We all strive and toil for life's luxuries and comfort yet do not find them. What is the reason for not achieving everlasting comfort? Gurbani gives us the answer. It tells us that we all have broken our link with God and hanker after possessions in this world. All these possessions are ultimately perishable. We attach ourselves to these perishable objects, which are also the reason why we break away from God. Just as someone tries to amass wealth, in order to achieve everlasting comfort. Just as a person gazes upon beautiful things and desires beautiful things to gain pleasure. So, we try to gain tranquillity through attaining power and kingdoms. Gurujī tell us that instead of achieving peace and tranquillity we open up the bale load of pain and suffering. Guru Arjan dev ji say that ...

sukh naahee bahuṭai Dhan khaatay.

There is no peace in earning lots of money.

sukh naahee paykhay niraṭ naatay.

There is no peace in watching dances and plays.

sukh naahee baho days kamaa-ay.

There is no peace in conquering lots of countries.

sarab sukhaa har har gun gaa-ay.

All peace comes from singing the Glorious Praises of the Lord, Har, Har.

Bhairo 5th guru, p1147

We obtain peace and tranquillity by singing the praises of god. Contentment comes by practicing the word of guru Arjan dev ji that ...

simra-o simar simar sukḥ paava-o.

Meditate, meditate, meditate in remembrance of Him, and find peace.

kal kalays tan maahi mitaava-o.

Worry and anguish shall be dispelled from your body.

Gauri sukhmani 5th guru, p262

Peace and contentment come from practicing the essential principles of gurbani. Those essential principles are ...

soDhat soDhat soDh tat beechaari-aa.

Searching, searching, searching, I have come to understand the essence of reality.

naam binaa sukh naahi sarpar haari-aa.

Without the Naam, there is no peace at all, and the mortal will surely fail.

Suhi 5th guru, p761

By meditating on god through his name, we obtain the praise in this life and hereafter. We obtain everlasting bliss, peace and all our hearts desires. Guru Amar das ji say ...

mayray man har jap sadaa Dhi-aa-ay.

O my mind, chant the Lord's Name, and meditate on Him forever.

sadaa anand hovai din raatee jo ichhai so-ee fal paa-ay. rahaa-o.

You shall always be in ecstasy, day and night, and you shall obtain the fruits of your desires.

Asa 3rd guru, p 363

Whereas we obtain all our hearts desires and all that we wish for by meditating on gods name, we also obtain peace, contentment, happiness, and everlasting contentment. The biggest blessing we get from meditating on god is that the filth accumulated on this soul and mind from countless previous births is washed away. As guru Amar das ji says...

janam janam kee is man ka-o mal laagee kaalaa ho-aa si-aahu.

The filth of countless incarnations sticks to this mind; it has become pitch black.

khanlee Dhottee ujlee na hova-ee jay sa-o Dhovan paahu.

The oily rag cannot be cleaned by merely washing it, even if it is washed a hundred times.

Salok 3rd guru, p651

The blessing bestowed upon us through meditating on God is that this mind loses its filth and becomes a reflection of the inner soul. Then God's name comes to reside in the mind.

parabh kai simran man kee mal jaa-ay.

In the remembrance of God, the filth of the mind is removed.

amrit naam rid maahi samaa-ay.

The Ambrosial Naam, the Name of the Lord, is absorbed into the heart.

How does the name of god erase filth from the mind? When clothes and our body become covered in dust, we wash our clothes and body with soap and water. Similarly meditating on god acts like a soap and drenching ourselves in loving reverence when meditating enlightens the mind.

bharee-ai hath pair tan dayh.

When the hands and the feet and the body are dirty,

paanee Dhotai utras khayh.

water can wash away the dirt.

moot paleetee kaparh ho-ay.

When the clothes are soiled and stained by urine,

day saaboon la-ee-ai oh Dho-ay.

soap can wash them clean

bharee-ai mat paapaa kai sang.

But when the intellect is stained and polluted by sin,

oh Dhopai naavai kai rang.

it can only be cleansed by the Love of the Name.

Japji 1st guru, p 4

Sometimes we have a doubt in our minds. This doubt or misgiving is that in order to meditate on God's name, we will have to abandon our job, home, family and take to the solitude of the forest or mountains. How will we earn a livelihood? In gurnat (the gurus intellect) teaches us that we must remain in this world carrying out our jobs diligently. We must not abandon our family and our duties to the rest of society by taking up solitude and becoming a hermit. We are taught to recite the name of God with our tongues, meditate in our hearts, focus our mind in remembrance and keep our body busy by working with our hands. As Bhagat Namdev ji has explained that...

naamaa kahai tilochanaa mukh tay raam sam^Haal.

Naam Dayv answers, O Trilochan, chant the Lord's Name with your mouth.

haath paa-o kar kaam sabh cheet niranjan naal.

With your hands and feet, do all your work, but let your consciousness remain with the Immaculate Lord

Salok Bhagat Kabir ji, p1375

This is the lifestyle we must adopt; this is the meditation we must practice.

How can we do two tasks at once? Bhagat Namdev ji has taught us five examples in gurbani of multitasking! He has given five worldly examples of how the mind can deal with two tasks at the same time and thus gives us the key to mediating at the same time. Just like the mind can do two tasks at the same time in the same manner, we should remember god whilst rising, walking, resting or sitting. Bhagat Namdev ji explain that....

aaneelay kaagad kaateelay goodee aakaas maDhay bharmee-alay.

The boy takes paper, cuts it and makes a kite, and flies it in the sky.

panch janaa si-o baat bata-oo-aa cheet so doree raakhee-alay.

Talking with his friends, he still keeps his attention on the kite string

man raam naamaa bayDhee-alay.

My mind has been pierced by the Name of the Lord,

jaisay kanik kalaa chit maa^Ndee-alay.

like the goldsmith, whose attention is held by his work.

aaneelay kumbh bharaa-eelay oodak raaj ku-aar purandree-ay.

The young girl in the city takes a pitcher, and fills it with water.

hasat binod beechaar kartee hai cheet so gaagar raakhee-alay.

She laughs, and plays, and talks with her friends, but she keeps her attention focused on the pitcher of water

mandar ayk du-aar das jaa kay ga-oo charaavan chhaadee-alay.

The cow is let loose, out of the mansion of the ten gates, to graze in the field.

paa^Nch kos par ga-oo charaavat cheet so bachhraa raakhee-alay.

It grazes up to five miles away, but keeps its attention focused on its calf.

kahat naamday-o sunhu tilochan baalak paalan pa-udhee-alay.

Says Naam Dayv, listen, O Trilochan: the child is laid down in the cradle.

antar baahar kaaj birooDhee cheet so baarik raakhee-alay.

Its mother is at work, inside and outside, but she holds her child in her thoughts

Ramkali Bhagat Namdev ji, p972

Those who attain a taste for meditating on Gods name abandon the pleasure of worldly things. They do not lust after worldly possessions. They proclaim to the world that...

raam ras pee-aa ray.

I drink in the sublime essence of the Lord.

jih ras bisar ga-ay ras a-or. rahaa-o.

With the taste of this essence, I have forgotten all other tastes

Gauri Bhagat Kabir ji, p 337

By tasting the pleasure of naam meditation of God, all other relishes of the world including intoxicants become tasteless and a true Sikh never indulges in them. The true Sikh views these intoxicants as worthless. He or she becomes the embodiment of Bhagat Kabir ji's words that...**Drinking elixir of naam meditation, other intoxicants do not appeal.** Those imbued souls say that...**They who are immersed in the meditation of god's name are addicted to the pleasure of this meditation alone.**

Money cannot buy the addictive relish or bliss that naam meditation brings. The blessing of naam meditation can be obtained by....**Surrendering our mind, body, our all, to the guru and accepting the decree of our guru.**

We should thus endeavour to obtain the priceless bounty of naam meditation. We should not indulge in the short-lived pleasure of intoxicants, which will destroy our present life, wealth, health and our afterlife. We should forever shun all kinds of drugs, alcohol, stimulants and addictive substances and obtain contentment in our lives. Gur ji will arrive with all manner of help and rescue you. Accept my apologies for any inadvertent omissions or mistakes

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa waheguru ji ki fateh

Ill effects of tobacco

- Lack of tolerance to infections, chronic airways disease, cough and lung diseases.
- Causes death from mouth cancer, decays teeth and causes loss of teeth through gum disease along with infections in the mouth.
- Destroys nerve cells, causes loss of memory destroys the sense of smell
- Disrupts the intellect and pollutes the environment
- Causes arteries harden and become blocked leading to blood pressure and heart attacks
- Causes mouth, throat and lung cancer

Ill Effects Of Alcohol

- * Destroys muscle and brain nerves causing ataxia, muscle tremor and loss of sanity
- * Throat, mouth and liver cancer
- * Epileptic fits and palsy and kidney destruction
- * Cirrhosis, water retention (ascites), uncontrollable haemorrhage
- * Heart diseases
- * Destroys intellect and willpower.
- * Makes family life a living hell
- * Bring disrepute and disrespect for free